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ABSTRACT

Because prisoners are often denied a chance to take the General Educational Development (GED) test because of low scores on the General Education Performance Index (GEPI), a study was conducted to determine whether total standard scores on the GEPI of 220 or greater could be used to predict total standard scores of 220 or greater on the GED test. The total standard test scores of 118 inmates who had taken both tests were used. Scores were categorized into three groups: (1) both scores above 220; (2) both scores below 220; and (3) one score above and the other score below 220. Categories one and two were considered correct predictions whereas category three was considered an incorrect prediction or expectation. A Z-Test of proportions was conducted on the total standard scores. Results, confirmed by chi-square analysis, showed that the higher the total standard score on the GEPI, the greater the chances for GED total standard scores to be correspondingly higher. A total standard score of 240 or higher on the GEPI yielded GED scores of 225 or higher (220 is passing) in 84 percent of the cases. The study recommended that 240 or higher on the GEPI should be used as the cut-off point for allowing inmates to take the GED. (17 references) (KC)

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# THE USE OF A QUALIFYING INSTRUMENT TO DETERMINE SUCCESS ON THE GENERAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT TEST

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# THE USE OF SCORES OF A QUALIFYING INSTRUMENT TO DETERMINE SUCCESS ON THE GENERAL EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT TEST

## ABSTRACT

Some inmates at Lake Correctional Institution are denied the chance of taking the GED because of the scores they make on the GEPI. The purpose of this study was to determine if total standard scores on the GEPI of 220 or greater could be used to predict total standard scores of 220 or greater on the GED.

The total standard scores on both GEPI and GED were categorized into three groups, namely: (1) both scores above 220, (2) both scores below 220, and (3) one score above and the other score below 220. Categories one and two were considered correct predictions or expectations while category three was considered an incorrect prediction or expectation.

A Z-Test of proportions was conducted on the total standard scores and it yielded a calculated value of 5.225. At the five percent significance level for a two-tailed test, the critical value of Z,(plus or minus 1.96), was smaller than the calculated value. The null hypothesis of

no difference was rejected. A two-by-two chi-square analysis was conducted as a way of validating the results. The results of the chi-square analysis yielded a calculated value of 4.431 which was too large, thereby, confirming the decision to reject the null hypothesis.

There is a significant difference between the total standard score of 220 or higher on the GEPI and a corresponding score on the GED. The higher the total standard score on the GEPI, the greater the chances are for GED total standard scores to be correspondingly higher.

A total standard score of 240 or higher yielded GED total standard scores of 225 or higher in about eighty-four cases out of a hundred. A total standard score of 225 or higher is one of the two criteria for passing the GED. It was also found out that a total standard of 260 or higher yielded corresponding GED total standard scores of 228 or higher.

# INTRODUCTION

## Statement Of The Problem

Correctional education is probably the only educational opportunity an inmate has and the General Education Development may be the highest academic credential an inmate will achieve while incarcerated. Most inmates at Lake Correctional Institution are aware of this and many are attempting to take advantage of the opportunity.

However, cost and administrative rules are beginning to impinge upon these aspirations. Inmates who need or want the General Education Development diploma are required to score a minimum total score of 220 on a qualifying test in order to be allowed to take the General Education Development test.

The cost of the General Education Development test is also a factor. Therefore, the problem which this study set out to investigate was that inmates who could pass the General Education Development test after a period of instruction are denied the opportunity of taking the test because of their scores on the qualifying test.

## Statement Of The Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if standard total scores on the qualifying instrument, the General Education Performance Index, could be used to predict success on the General Education Development test.

## Method Of Investigation

The total standard scores of 118 inmates who had taken the qualifying test and the test of the General Education Development were used. The scores consisted of total standard scores greater than or equal to 220 and less than 220 on the qualifying instrument; 220 or greater than 220 on qualifying instrument; and less than 220 on the General Education Development test.

The total standard scores less than 220 on the qualifying instrument represent those inmates who took the General Education Development test prior to the 1986 requirement of a total standard score of 220 or greater on the qualifying instrument. Before this time, the qualifying test was only used as a measure of readiness by the teacher.

The subjects were all male inmates at Lake Correctional Institution. Occasionally, students from other institutions

enroll in the General Education Development Preparatory Class after attempting the test for one or more times. These students' scores were not included in the study since their scores on the qualifying instrument were not available.

## BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Lake Correctional Institution is an adult male State prison. During the past three years, the average passing rate on the GED after three attempts has been sixty percent. The GED is administered after every three months.

The GED Preparatory Class has had twenty inmates in a class. About fifteen students have qualified to take the GED at the time of each of the three administrations. For each GED test, approximately one-half of the candidates take the test for the second or third time. It costs approximately seventy dollars in GED testing fees for each testing period. There are four testing periods presently in the calendar year, making a total of two hundred and ten dollars ($210.00) per year for GED testing fees for those who qualify.

In a recent publication from the Correctional Education School Authority,(CESA), a new GED Testing Policy was

outlined. The policy set eligibility criterion for the GED test at 220 total standard score on the General Education Performance Index (GEPI) or an average minimum grade equivalent of 8.5 on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE).

In addition to the score requirement, the CESA publication also placed a limit on the number of retests that an inmate can take. The Education Department and CESA will only pay for two retests because the new GED test for 1988 has only two forms. Therefore, inmates who do not pass after two retests will have to wait for the next year.

New guidelines have also been adopted by the GED Testing Service. Accordingly, candidates will be required to write an essay as part of the Writing Skills subtest. The new guidelines have also reduced the number of times the test will be given to an individual candidate in a calendar year to two instead of the previous three. The CESA Policy and the GEDTS guidelines have begun to cause concern among the inmates at Lake Correctional Institution. This concern is specifically with regard to the teacher who has to keep unmotivated students until they qualify.

## Review Of Literature

The use of GEPI scores to determine success on the GED is probably justifiable. However, to have a minimum score

requirement which is lower than the minimum standard score of 225 for passing the GED is unrealistic and unreasonable.

The GEPI relies on content and predictive validity. In determining the predictive validity of GEPI, (Seaman and Seaman,1981) used the standard scores of GEPI and compared them to the standard scores on the GED for each subtest. When the authors compared the two forms of GEPI to the two forms of the GED, they reported that form AA of the GEPI and either of the GED forms had a correlation coefficient as high as 0.73 and as low as 0.61. The correlation of form BB of the GEPI and either of the GED forms was similarly reported to be as high as 0.68 and as low as 0.61 (Seaman and Seaman,1981).

The reliance on GEPI test scores to determine success on the GED is based on the fact that GEPI tests are supposed to indicate the performance that may likely be attained by candidates on the actual GED battery (Patience and Whitney,1982). This means that inmates who score lower than or equal to the total standard score of 220 on the GEPI will probably do the same on the GED. In Guthrie's words, we should practice as if the game is being played (Bower and Hilgard (1981).

According to the Commission on Education Credit and Credentials, only seventy percent of high school graduates should qualify for the high school credential. The Commission does not set any limit on how many GED candidates

should receive the GED credential (GEDTS,1982).

When Grande (1987), used the length of class attendance and preparation to predict success on the GED, it was discovered that each subtest required a different length of preparatory time. It was also revealed that inmates with lower grade equivalents took longer than those with relatively higher grade equivalents. Grade equivalent was not used as a predictive measure.

Rockowitz et al.(1981), have compiled preparatory materials for the GED. They have attempted to relate success on the GED to success on their diagnostic tests. Success on the GED is measured by success on the contents of their preparatory materials.

## PROCEDURES

### Procedures For Collection Of Data

In the conduct of this study, the data consisted of two standard scores for each inmate in the GED Preparatory Class. They were scores on the GED and GEPI. The standard total score is a sum of five scores on the subtests. The scores are recorded in the inmate's education record. The

GED scores were recorded from the results sent to the institution. All scores were made available for the study.

The scores were recorded on data sheets which specified two headings: GEPI and GED. Under each heading, there were two categories of total standard scores: those total standard scores less than 220, and those standard total scores which were 220 or more than 220. Each subject was classified into one of three categories. Specifically, (1) both scores above 220, (2) both scores below 220, and (3) one score above and the other below 220. Categories one and two were considered as correct predictions or expectations and category three was considered as erroneous prediction or expectation for the purpose of the study.

The scores of those inmates who had taken the qualifying test and the GED were the only ones considered in the study. The scores of inmates who were taking the GED for the second or third time and whose scores on the qualifying instrument were not available were not included in the study. There were forty-three inmates whose total standard scores were less than 220 on the qualifying instrument and seventy-six whose total standard scores were 220 or greater on the qualifying instrument.

## Research Questions

To determine if the total standard scores on the

qualifying instrument could be used to determine expected scores on the GED, the research questions that were asked were stated as:(1) What is the difference between the proportions of correct and incorrect expectations of the total standard scores on the qualifying instrument and the GED? (2) Could the total standard score on the qualifying instrument of 220 or greater be used to predict a successful total standard score on the GED?

## Procedures For Treatment Of Data

The Z-test of proportions was used to compare the difference between the two proportions, namely: the proportions of correct expectations and the proportions of incorrect expectations.

## Hypotheses

The research hypothesis was that those inmates who had total standard scores of 220 or higher on the GED would be the ones who also scored 220 or higher on the qualifying instrument. The null hypothesis which was tested was stated as: There is no significant difference between the proportions of correct and incorrect expectations of the total standard scores on the qualifying instrument and the GED above and below 220. The alternate hypothesis was that the proportion of correct expectations would be

significantly greater than the proportion of incorrect expectations. Any difference that was greater than one which could occur by chance more than five in one hundred cases was accepted as reason to reject the null hypothesis.

## Assumptions

It was assumed that the test scores were valid measures of the trait or ability being examined, namely, educational development. It was also assumed that the tests were properly administered and that the subjects participated in the study in good faith.

## Limitations

This study is limited with respect to the subjects, instruments, duration and extent. The subjects were drawn from a State correctional institution. Generalization to other populations should not be made. The subjects are also self-selected to some extent. Practice effects could make it necessary to drop those subjects who have received prior preparation or prior administration of the GED test. The scores are therefore, limited to the first time an inmate took the qualifying test and the GED.

The instruments, GED and the qualifying test are standard aptitude, group administered, paper and pencil

tests. They are subject to the usual psychometric limitations with respect to reliability and validity. The duration of the study was limited in time to the few weeks necessary to gather the data. This is not a longitudinal study and the data refer to only one point in time. The populations and circumstances at any future time may be quite different. The extent is limited in that only two achievement variables are employed in this study. There are many other variables which might be appropriate to study for prediction of General Education Development scores.

## Definition Of Terms

In this study, the following acronyms have specific meanings: GEPI was used for the General Education Performance Index and was also used to mean the same thing as the qualifying instrument or test; GED was used as the acronym for General Education Development; TABE was used for the Test of Adult Basic Education; and CESA was used as the acronym for the Correctional Education School Authority.

## RESULTS

There were eight inmates whose total standard scores were less than 220 on the GEPI but 220 or higher on the GED.

TABLE 1

Number of inmates who scored less than 220 or 220 and greater on the GED and GEPI and the Z-value between the proportions

| | GED Only | GEPI Only | GED & GEPI | Z-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Less than 220 | 15 | 8 | 34 | 5.225 |
| Greater than 220 | 8 | 15 | 61 | |
| Total | 23 | 23 | 95 | |

Fifteen inmates had total standard scores of 220 or greater on the GEPI but less than 220 on the GED. Sixty-one inmates had total standard scores of 220 or greater on both GEPI and GED, while thirty-four inmates had total standard scores less than 220 on the GEPI and GED as shown in Table 1.

There were 185 total standard scores that were either above 220 or below 220 on the GEPI and GED. The sum of the total standard scores that were 220 and higher on the GED but less than 220 on the GEPI and total standard scores of 220 and higher on the GEPI but less than 220 on the GED was twenty-three, a proportion of 0.12 out of 185. The sum of standard total scores below 220 on both the GEPI and GED and standard total scores above 220 on both GEPI and GED was ninety-five. There were 135 standard total scores that fell in this category and the proportion of ninety-five to 135 was 0.70.

The statistical test revealed a calculated Z-value of 5.225. A two-by-two chi-square analysis that was conducted to validate the results showed a calculated value of 4.431 at one degree of freedom (Table 1).

## DISCUSSION

This study was undertaken to determine if total standard scores of 220 or greater on the GEPI were correct

expectations of success on the GED. The result of the statistical test revealed that at a five percent significance level, the calculated value of Z, 3.225, was higher than one would expect for a two-tailed test. The critical value of Z at five percent is plus or minus 1.96. This means that the null hypothesis of no difference between correct and incorrect expectations is rejected.

It was hypothesized from the onset that a correct expectation of GEPI and GED total standard scores would be as follows: GEPI total standard score of 220 or higher will have corresponding GED total standard score of 220 or higher; GEPI total standard score of less than 220 will also have less than 220 for the corresponding GED total standard score. Any deviation from these expectations was considered as erroneous or incorrect expectation.

When Covington et al.(1978), used the GATB to predict success on the GED, it was realized that a score of 110 or higher on the G or V subtest would definitely predict a pass on the GED. They however, discovered that eighty percent of the examinees passed the GED when the norms were set for GATB at ninety-five for clerical perception (Q), ninety for general ability (G), and eighty-five for verbal aptitude (V).

It is evident, as the results show in appendix A, that as the GEPI total standard scores increased beyond 220, the possibility of obtaining equivalent or higher GED total

# APPENDIX A

Pre-GED and GED scores less than 220 or 220 and greater.

SCORES 220 AND ABOVE

| TOTALS | |
|---|---|
| PRE- | GED |
| --- | --- |
| 309 | 284 |
| 308 | 291 |
| 305 | 300 |
| 305 | 300 |
| 302 | 248 |
| 288 | 283 |
| 288 | 283 |
| 281 | 261 |
| 274 | 253 |
| 267 | 237 |
| 264 | 268 |
| 264 | 302 |
| 264 | 268 |
| 262 | 242 |
| 261 | 252 |
| 260 | 228 |
| 258 | 246 |
| 257 | 211 |
| 253 | 264 |
| 251 | 211 |
| 251 | 220 |
| 251 | 242 |
| 251 | 242 |
| 250 | 231 |
| 249 | 238 |
| 248 | 236 |
| 247 | 239 |
| 247 | 135 |
| 247 | 239 |
| 247 | 233 |
| 246 | 239 |
| 246 | 239 |
| 246 | 263 |
| 245 | 235 |
| 245 | 231 |
| 245 | 235 |
| 245 | 231 |
| 244 | 223 |
| 244 | 243 |
| 244 | 257 |
| 244 | 257 |
| 243 | 230 |
| 243 | 246 |
| 243 | 246 |
| 243 | 252 |
| 240 | 209 |
| 240 | 223 |
| 240 | 258 |
| 236 | 238 |
| 235 | 232 |
| 235 | 225 |
| 231 | 246 |
| 231 | 246 |
| 229 | 221 |
| 228 | 212 |
| 226 | 225 |
| 226 | 225 |
| 225 | 214 |
| 225 | 200 |
| 225 | 262 |
| 225 | 201 |
| 224 | 205 |
| 224 | 211 |
| 224 | 240 |
| 224 | 211 |
| 223 | 215 |
| 223 | 227 |
| 223 | 215 |
| 223 | 193 |
| 222 | 241 |
| 222 | 241 |
| 222 | 221 |
| 221 | 221 |
| 221 | 221 |
| 220 | 217 |
| 220 | 205 |
| AVG. -> 246 | 237 |

SCORES BELOW 220

| TOTALS | |
|---|---|
| PRE- | GED |
| --- | --- |
| 219 | 219 |
| 219 | 219 |
| 218 | 216 |
| 218 | 210 |
| 218 | 228 |
| 218 | 210 |
| 218 | 219 |
| 218 | 200 |
| 216 | 223 |
| 216 | 199 |
| 216 | 223 |
| 214 | 196 |
| 214 | 196 |
| 214 | 196 |
| 214 | 216 |
| 213 | 194 |
| 212 | 211 |
| 212 | 203 |
| 211 | 205 |
| 211 | 228 |
| 211 | 219 |
| 211 | 212 |
| 211 | 216 |
| 208 | 235 |
| 206 | 203 |
| 203 | 221 |
| 203 | 221 |
| 202 | 211 |
| 201 | 196 |
| 201 | 174 |
| 201 | 174 |
| 200 | 210 |
| 195 | 213 |
| 194 | 195 |
| 190 | 186 |
| 190 | 186 |
| 189 | 158 |
| 184 | 196 |
| 175 | 222 |
| 175 | 199 |
| 143 | 191 |
| 143 | 177 |
| AVG. -> 203 | 205 |

standard scores increased. There were forty-three inmates who earned total standard scores of 240 and greater on the GEPI. Four of these inmates scored less than 220 on the GED. It can be implied from the results that GEPI total standard scores are expected to predict scores of the same or higher on the GED. It would however, seem that total standard scores of 240 or higher on the GEPI would correctly be expected to predict GED total standard scores of the same magnitude.

When Musgrove (1981), compared the predictive abilities of the Official GED to the GEPI in determining success on the GED, it was shown that there was no significant difference between the two instruments, except for the reading subtest, which showed a significant difference in favor of the Official Practice GED. The ability to predict GED performance using standardized instruments have been implied, as Miller (1971), Moore (1984), Klein and Trione (1967), and TABE Norms Book (1987) have shown.

It was expected that GEPI total standard scores of 220 and higher would imply GED total standard scores of the same magnitude. The results show that there were sixty-one inmates who scored total standard scores of 220 or greater on both GEPI and GED. The implication, as the statistical test showed, is that there is a difference between GEPI total standard scores and GED total standard scores. Those total standard scores that were 220 or greater on the GEPI

had GED total standard scores of almost the same magnitude in nearly all of the cases. There were fifteen total standard scores of 220 or greater on the GEPI that failed to produce GED total standard scores of 220 or greater.

When Klein and Trione (1967), used the GATB 'G' score to predict GED achievement, they found that G scores less than ninety had lower predictive power than G scores of ninety to 109. Their findings revealed that as the G score increased, the probability of success on the GED also increased. These findings are congruent with those of this study. The higher the total standard score on the GEPI, 240 or greater, the higher the probability of passing the GED or earning a similar total standard score as on the GEPI.

The Norms Book by the publishers of TABE (1987), has provided a rationale for predicting GED performance. It is maintained that, most often, adult educators recommend that their students take the GED only when they believe that the students will pass. A grade equivalent of 8.5 on the TABE, as suggested by CESA assumes this rationale. A student who earns 8.5 on the TABE is likely to make a total standard score of 237 on the GED (TABE Norms Book,1987).

Grande (1987), predicted GED performance based on length of class attendance. It was revealed that the chances of passing the GED were higher for those students who possessed higher grade equivalents.

Other variables such as mastery of content and

paragraph meaning on the Stanford Achievement Test have been used to predict GED performance (Miller,1971). Swartz and Whitney (1987), have also attempted to relate performance on the Writing Skills subtest of the GED to the essay questions on the GED in terms of content. They revealed that the essay questions are highly correlated to the Writing Skills subtest and could be used to predict success on the Writing Skills subtest of the GED.

Moore and Davies (1984), attempted to predict GED scores using motivational variables such as expectancy and variance. They found that motivational variables were not correct predictors of academic performance.

## Implications

The implications from the study could be stated as follows: (1) GEPI total standard scores of 220 or higher will imply GED total standard scores of the same magnitude almost eighty-one percent of the time, (2) the higher the total standard scores on the GEPI, the higher the chances are for GED total standard scores of 220 or greater, and (3) at a five percent significance level, there is a difference between correctly expected GEPI total standard scores and the correctly expected GED total standard scores. (Appendix A)

As a validation of the results, a two-by-two chi-square analysis was conducted on the difference between the correct

expectations and the incorrect expectations (Tuckman,1972). The calculated value of the chi-square was 4.431. For one degree of freedom and a probability of five percent, the critical value of the chi-square is 3.84 which is less than the calculated value. This was ground enough to reject the null hypothesis of no difference between the correct expectations and incorrect expectations.

## Recommendations

The recommendations that follow from the results of this study are limited. Firstly, it is recommended that when permission to take the GED is based on GEPI total standard scores, 240 or higher on the GEPI be used as the cut-off point. The results show that there were forty-three total standard scores of 240 or higher on the GEPI and only four of these scores had corresponding GED total standard scores less than 220. There were thirty-six total standard scores of 240 or greater that definitely produced passing total standard scores on the GED of 225 or greater. This means that when the cut-off for the total standard score is 240 or greater, about eighty-four percent of the students will probably pass the GED.

Secondly, all GEPI total standard scores of 260 and higher produced GED total standard scores of 228 or greater. Those inmates who made GEPI total standard scores of 260 should be allowed to take the GED without further

preparation. The results showed they will pass the GED with little preparation.

Thirdly, the results show that the expectation of total standard scores less than 220 on the GEPI to yield GED total standard scores of 220 or greater was incorrect and erroneous. There were forty-three inmates who were allowed to take the GED despite the fact that they had GEPI total standard scores less than 220. There were only eight GED scores from the forty-three that were 220 or greater. Based on this low percentage, (nineteen percent), it is recommended that the present requirement of GEPI total standard score of 220 or higher be maintained.

In a study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Labor, it was found that when the norms are set at ninety for the G, eighty-five for the V, and ninety-five for the Q of the GATB, success on the GED could be almost predicted with certainty (D.O.L.,1977). The results of the present study show that when the total standard score is 240 or higher on the GEPI, the chances of making comparable GED total standard scores are higher. The relationship between GEPI total standard scores or GATB scores is positive as the scores increase (Klein and Trione,1979).

The problem which formed the basis for this study was that some inmates at Lake Correctional Institution were denied the opportunity of taking the GED because of their total standard scores on the GEPI. It has been suggested,

(Sabino and Seaman,1988), that as funding increases for adult education programs, GED Preparatory Programs would be expected to show accountability and cost effectiveness. The cut-off point on the GEPI that assures a higher chance of passing is one way of showing accountability. Miller (1976), however, has maintained that because of the cost effectiveness associated with GED programs, all those who wish to take the test should be allowed.

This study was undertaken with the purpose of determining if, in fact, GEPI total standard scores were correct expectations of an inmate's performance on the GED. The results show that the higher the total standard score on the GEPI for an inmate, the higher the chances are for that inmate to pass the GED. The total standard score of 240 and higher on the GEPI is recommended as a correct expectation of GED performance.

## Potential For Improvement Or Positive Change

During the formulation of this study, two outcomes were possible: It was expected that there would be no significant difference between the correct expectations and the incorrect expectations of GEPI and GED total standard scores; it was also expected that there would be a significant difference between the two expectations. The results have shown that the latter expectation is true. Therefore, it is suggested that in the future, the GEPI be

used to select GED candidates. GEPI total standard scores of 220 or higher are expected to produce correct expectations of GED performance and they should be maintained. Consistent with the results of this study,it is however, suggested that in order to correctly predict GED performance using GEPI total standard scores, a new cut-off of 240 or higher be established.

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